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ABSTRACT

A description is given of a study to determine whether the attitudes of white middle class student teachers toward children speaking Black dialect could be changed positively and their listening comprehension improved. In a special program conducted by a teacher center a group of student teachers were exposed to brief intensive training in listening to and analyzing tapes of children speaking in Black dialect. In subsequent comparative tests this group demonstrated greater comprehension of the dialect than did a group that did not receive training. The conclusion is drawn that attitudes of student teachers toward norstandard dialects can be changed in a positive way. (JD)

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A STUDY OF DIALECT PREPARATION OF STUDENT TEACHERS IN AN URBAN TEACHER EDUCATION CENTER PROGRAM

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In Charlotte Mayerson's Two Blocks Apart, Juan Gonzales, a seventeen-year-old high school senior, says "I'm not going out into the street and talk like that. They won't believe me." For survival in the streets, Juan had learned the necessity of speaking the language of his peers. Student teachers often have found the real world of the school classroom a grim struggle for survival. Like Hamlet, who was consumed by love of art and knowledge and left the university to face the realities of his kingdom in disarray, student teachers immersed in an environment of cultivated speech and learning theory, find that the "standard" English and theories of instruction of the college classroom have little bearing on the confusing realities of the school and community.

In the experiment reported here, student teachers had the opportunity to intergrate theory and practice within the environment of a teacher education center. Theories of the intrinsic worth of nonstandard dialects, acceptance without prejudice of Black dialect, and the ability to understand Black dialect were used in the language microcosm of inner city elementary schools. Particularly the study attempted to determine whether the attitudes of middle class student teachers toward children speaking Black dialect could be changed in positive ways and their listening comprehension of Black dialect improved.

Introduction

During the past ten years teacher education has undergone fundamental changes. The primary change may be found in the "move to the field"; some

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teacher educators refer to this as field-based teacher education. There were several factors which served to encourage the move to the field of reality. Some of these were:

1. Federal and State Departments of Education supporting and moving to competency based certification systems. Most of these systems were grounded in actual classroom settings where teaching competency could be systematically observed and measured.

2. The closing of campus schools in many colleges and universities that had teacher preparation programs. The result of this element disappearing from teacher preparation was the need for finding settings in public schools where participation, observation, student teaching and methods and materials could be located.

3. General discontent on the part of students and teaching staff members in colleges and universities with the way teachers were being prepared. This concern emerged with a greater realization that theory and practice had to be more fully integrated in the teacher preparation process.

With the realization that teacher preparation must be associated with real classroom settings, colleges and universities began to take to the field. One of the major concepts that emerged was the teacher education center.

The Teacher Education Center

The two central ideas behind teacher education centers are found in the concepts of preservice and inservice and collaboration.

A teacher education center is a public school setting of one or more schools which serve the preservice and inservice needs of teacher education programs and public school staff members. The preservice dimension usually

entails observation, case studies, assistant teaching, and student teaching experiences. The university provides staff members to be "on the scene" while these experiences are taking place.

The inservice dimension is formulated around the teaching and learning experiences needed by staff members in the center schools to become more effective teachers. The delivery of this aspect of the center program is usually done through seminars, workshops, courses, and even the full delivery of a Masters Degree program. To increase its impact, courses are planned around the needs of pupils, teachers, and community surrounding the center schools.

The second concept, collaboration, relates to the creation of an advisory council which oversees the development of center policies, administrative procedures, projects, research, supervision and inservice needs. The advisory council usually consists of public school teachers, administrators, community representatives, and college personnel. This body serves to find more effective ways of bridging the expanse between public schools and colleges/universities; collaboration may well serve to be the key concept which will alter the future of teacher preparation.

An Elementary Teacher Education Center

The brief background mentioned in the previous discussion provides the base for understanding the elementary teacher education center developed by the Atlanta Public Schools and Georgia State University. This is an urban teacher education center which is comprised of three elementary schools, K - 7. The pupil population is ninety per-cent black; the pupils live primarily in apartments and approximately 75% of them come from broken homes.

The student teachers typically assigned to the elementary center are white and middle class. They have completed all their methods and materials

courses and almost all of the elementary teacher preparation sequence. The center program for student teachers stresses teaching competency development in the areas of questioning strategies, reinforcement and behavioral management techniques. There is also a large program component devoted to obtaining knowledge about the community and its socio-economic and political organization. This also contributes to a student teacher's knowledge of community resources that may be integrated into classroom instruction.

A teacher education center coordinator serves to act as a liaison between the schools, community and university. Preservice and inservice programs are developed and implemented through the efforts of the center coordinator, the Advisory Council and instructional staff members.

The elementary teacher education center, then, serves to implement the concepts discussed earlier in this paper. It was in this context that the following study was conceived and implemented.

The Teaching Center Environment for Studying Language Problems

One may view teaching centers as microcosms of the larger speech communities surrounding the schools. Here teacher candidates have the opportunity to tune their ears to the delightful varieties of American speech. Likewise, they can observe firsthand the remarkable language skills as well as the language limitations of children.

The well-organized teacher center provides a climate for experimentation. This center offered an appropriate environment for Driscoll and Billiard to investigate the attitudes of teacher candidates toward Black dialect, their ability to comprehand this dialect, and the possibilities of changing their attitudes toward and increasing their comprehension of Black dialect.

An Investigation of Language Attitudes and Listening Comprehension

It is our belief that the attitudes teachers have toward nonstandard dialects are vitally important to the language growth of children. Williams (1970) summarizes extensive research which supports the hypothesis that subjective responses of individuals to speech are stereotyped versions of their attitudes toward individuals using that speech. Also, research shows that the expectations of teachers have a crucial influence upon the performance of their students. Goodman (1973) hypothesizes "that the solution to reading problems of divergent speakers lies in the attitudes of teachers toward the language of learners." Thus, in view of the importance of teachers' attitudes toward nonstandard dialects, these writers planned an experiment that would attempt to change attitudes in positive ways and affect practices of elementary teacher candidates at the teacher center.

In addition, these investigators decided to determine whether intensive training in listening to and analyzing the regular features of Atlantan Black dialect would enable teacher candidates to understand more readily the oral language usage of their students than would those teacher candidates entering the classroom without this training. In surveys taken by Billiard in undergraduate and graduate English Education classes at Georgia State University, both experienced teachers and teacher candidates had indicated they often have difficulty understanding the oral language of many of their students. Since speaking and listening are major communication activities in American classroom (Tiedt, 1967), mutual understanding between the teacher and the students would appear to be a prerequisite to many learning activities. Stewart (1967) warns of the serious nature of this problem by pointing out that teachers "can render a nonstandard speaker disfunctional in exchanges

with standard-English-speaking members of the middle class." Minor pronunciation differences between standard English and a nonstandard dialect tend to "pile up in an utterance to such an extent that the nonstandard version becomes unintelligible to a middle-class listener" according to observations made by Stewart.

Procedures

During this experiment, twenty-five teacher candidates assigned to the control group and twenty-five assigned to the experimental group completed the program. The students were randomly assigned to the two groups and pre-tested and post-tested as indicated in the following design:

$$R \quad O_1 \quad X \quad O_2$$

$$R \quad O_3 \quad \quad O_4$$

R = randomly assigned groups

O_1, O_3 = pretests

O_2, O_4 = post-tests

Each group was involved in the experimental program during a period of approximately forty hours extending over seven days prior to the beginning of student teaching.

The control group under Driscoll's supervision followed the usual activities for teacher candidates during the first seven days in the teacher center. These activities included an orientation session, lesson planning, unit planning, teaching, post analysis of mini-lessons, observations in classes, conferences, and student teaching assignments.

The experimental group listened to previously recorded interviews with Atlantan Black and White children. From listening to a random sampling of

these tapes of informal and formal speech of middle socioeconomic status (SES) Black and White and low socioeconomic status (SES) Black and White Atlantan students in grades one through six, the experimental group identified the following grammatical features as occurring more frequently in the speech of the low SES Blacks than in the speech of the other groups:

1. Possession by juxtaposition (instead of genitive)

   "In his brother room"

2. Invariant <u>be</u>

   before adjectives: "I be scared."

   before adverbs: "I be out dere. . ."

   as progressive present: "I still be swimmin'."

3. Zero copula

   with adjectives: "Boy, John, you crazy!"

   with adverbs; "Now she over at the funeral home."

4. Past tense unmarked

   "I ask'em if a policeman come in and he go past the cop and he say. . ."

5. <u>Them</u> as a demonstrative

   "Them girl was mad."

6. <u>What</u> as a relative pronoun

   "I like to go up on that thing what goes around in the air."

7. Existential <u>it</u>

   "It was a snake in there hangin' on top."

8. Multiple negation

   ". . .if nobody don't play with me."

9. Pleonastic or appositive pronoun

   "My daddy's brother he was sittin . . ."

10. Absence of the plural suffix

    "She took ten pencil"

11. Progressive verb + in

    ". . .the first thing I know he bitin' his hand."

12. Gonna used as a purposeful future

    "You gonna get a whippin'."

13. Third person singular present tense

    "She dive into the water."

The experimental group also read compositions written by Black Atlantan students. The instructor led general discussions on major regional and social dialect differences and their causes. Also the right/wrong approach to usage as contrasted to the principle of appropriateness was discussed and situations requiring shifts in register or style were role played. Problems of divided usage and the difficulty of defining "standard" English were considered. Study of appropriate selections of Black literature provided opportunities for members of the experimental group to gain insight into the use of dialect in depicting character and in capturing the life style of a subculture in American society. To enhance further a sensitivity to Black culture and Black dialect, the experimental group engaged in a study of the school cummunity through conversations with school patrons, businessmen, politicians, school dropouts, and randomly selected informants.

Instruments were selected for this study with the purpose of measuring the performance of the subjects on three dependent variables; (1) general knowledge of language education (language customs, standards, language learning principles), (2) attitudes toward variations in language usage, and (3) listening comprehension of the speech of Black Atlantan elementary children. The instrument chosen for the measurement of knowledge of language education

was Frogner's Language Inquiry (1969). Frogner established content validity of this test by asking for the judgments of ten linguistic scholars on items to be included and on the appropriate responses to these items. Using a time interval of nine weeks between pretesting and posttesting with the instrument in an adolescent literature class of thirty students, Billiard found the reliability of the Frogner Inquiry by this method to be .83. The attitude toward variations in language test required the respondents to mark a semantic differential scale labeled "educated" on one end and "uneducated" on the other as they listened to a tape of contrasting pronunciation and grammatical features of divided usage in "standard" English. The validity of these items as representing variations in standard American English is based upon Linguistic Atlas research. Test-retest-reliability of this instrumemt has resulted in r's ranging from .78 to .89. The instrument for determining the subject's top comprehension of the speech of Black Atlantan elementary children was a tape recording of a third grade child telling an imaginative story to a small group of friends. This tape is considered a valid representation of non-standard Black Atlantan dialect, inasmuch as the sample contains nine of the thirteen previously identified Black dialect grammatical features and most of the nonstandard phonological features observed in the tape recordings of Atlantan Black elementary students' speech. Test-retest reliability of this instrument has produced r's ranging from .74 to .82.

Analysis of the Data from the Pre-Teaching Phase of the Experimental Program

After the completion of the pre-teaching experimental program, the data were submitted to analysis of variance. Each student teacher in the control and experimental groups had taken the Frogner Inquiry pretest and posttest. The difference between these two scores for each individual was used as the

basic data to determine whether a significant difference between the two groups in knowledge-of language education had developed during the forty-hour treatment period. Table 1 summarizes the one-way analysis of variance used to compare the gain scores for the experimental and control groups.

TABLE 1

Summary Analysis of Variance: One-Way ANOVA

Gain Scores in Knowledge of Language Education Measure

Source	df	SS	MS	F
(A) Between: Control versus Experimental	1	2508.20	2508.20	6.16*
Residual	48	19,541.28	407.11	
Total	49	22,049.48		

$F(1,48)$ = approx. 4.04 with $\alpha = .05$.

The F value ($p < .05$) indicates that an intensive short training period can produce a significant increase in student teachers' knowledge of language customs, standards, and language learning principles.

Scores on the language attitude test were based upon the differences between pretest and posttest scores of each individual on the semantic differential scales using the terms "educated" and uneducated" as opposites. Attitudes of the respondents toward a particular pronunciation or grammatical feature could be expressed across various intensities of feelings ranging from "strongly agree" that the feature represented educated speech to "strongly agree" that the utterance represented uneducated speech. The score for an individual on a particular item was determined by counting a response that

agreed with the linguists' judgments as 5. Otherwise, the score for the item was 5 minus the distance (number of spaces) away from the appropriate response. Table 2 summarizes the one-way analysis of variance used to compare the gain scores for the experimental and control groups.

TABLE 2

Summary Analysis of Variance: One-way ANOVA

Gain Score Analysis on Language Attitude Measure

Source	df	SS	MS	F
(A) Between: Control and Experimental	1	754.82	754.82	7.32*
Residual	48	4951.68	103.16	
Total	49	1246.50		

$F(1,48)$ = approx. 7.20 with $\alpha = .01$

The F value ($p < .01$) suggests that student teachers' attitudes toward language variations in standard American speech can be changed in a relatively short period to more reasonable, positive views.

Scores on the subjects' comprehension of the speech of Black Atlantan elementary children were determined by counting the number of utterances in the transcript of the third grader's story which were identifiable in the student teachers' written version of the taped story. Since comprehension, not reproduction of the child's speech, was being measured, one sentence, for example, written by a respondent might encompass the thoughts expressed in three sentences of the Black child. In such an instance, the student teacher would receive a score of three for comprehending that many utterances

of the child. Table 3 summarizes the one-way analysis of variance of the gain scores for the two groups.

TABLE 3

Summary Analysis of Variance: One-way ANOVA

Gain Score Analysis on Black English Comprehension Measure

Source	df	SS	MS	F
(A) Between: Control versus Experimental	1	417.03	417.03	5.27*
Residual	48	3099.68	79.16	
Total	49	3516.71		

$F(1,48)$ = approx. 4.04 with $\alpha = .05$

In the anlysis, the F value ($p < .05$) indicates that intensive training in listening for minor promunciation differences between "standard" English and nonstandard dialect can increase significantly middle-class listeners' comprehension of nonstandard speech; e.g., Black dialect.

Analysis of the Data from the Teaching Phase of the Experimental Program

The second phase of this experiment was designed to determine whether growth in knowledge of language education, positive change in attitude toward nonstandard Black dialect, and in increase in comprehension of Black dialect would result in a significant change in teacher behavior in the classroom. To investigate this crucial question, the researchers asked the student teachers in the experimental and control groups to tape record lessons taught at the end of three, six, and nine weeks during their student teaching which immediately followed the seven-day pre-teaching training period.

The fifty tape recordings for the experimental and control groups were analyzed for each time period in terms of the teacher's attitudes toward the children's language and the teachers' comprehension of Black dialect. A twenty-minute segment of each tape was analyzed. Scoring of a student teacher's attitude was accomplished by assigning a positive point for each instance of the teacher's acceptance without criticism of a student's non-standard oral reading of a passage with apparent comprehension. Likewise, a positive point was awarded the student teachers for each instance of their accepting or giving positive reinforcement to a child's expression in non-standard speech of meaningful or constructive ideas. A negative point was recorded for each instance of the teacher's rejection or criticism of the child's nonstandard usage in reading or speaking.

In scoring the student teachers' comprehension of Black dialect, each instance in which a failure to understand the child was evidenced by the student teacher's re-phrasing a question that had been answered adequately or obviously missing the meaning of a student's comment or question was recorded as a negative point.

Since the nature of oral communication is complex especially without the context of gesture, body contact, and use of space, the researchers asked two colleagues to random sample the analyzed twenty-minute segments of several students' tapes. The inter-rater reliability of the researchers' evaluations on these random samples was $r = .79$ for attitudes and $r = .71$ for comprehension.

Scores were now available for two dependent variables, attitude toward language and conprehension of Black dialect, as evidence of the student teachers' behavior in the classroom. Since the experiment now involved two independent variables, groups and time, and two dependent variables which were measured on the same subjects on three occasions, a two-way multivariate

analysis of variance with repeated measures was an appropriate design. Table 4 summarizes the multivariate analysis of variance on measures of attitude and comprehension.

TABLE 4

Summary of Multivariate Analysis of Variance with Measures of Attitude Toward and Comprehension of Black English over Time

	Source	df	SS	MS	F
(A)	Between groups: Control versus experimental	1	1153.71	1153.71	515.07**
(B)	Within groups: Three time intervals	2	48.37	24.19	10.80**
(AB)	Interactions between groups and time	2	11.25	5.62	2.51
	B by subjects within groups	96	215.03	2.24	

$F(1,96)$ = approx. 6.98 with α = .01

$F(2,96)$ = approx. 4.90 with α = .01

$F(2,96)$ = approx. 3.11 with α = .05

The F value (< .01) for factor A indicates a significant main effect between the control and experimental groups. Likewise the F value ($p < .01$) for factor B shows a significant main effect within groups for the time intervals. However, there is no interaction effect between the factors A and B. Even though these results show that the experimental group performed significantly better than the control group on a combination of the dependent variables (attitude and comprehension), the effects of each of these variables across

time (nine week period) could have important implications for training teachers.

Table 5 presents a one-way analysis of variance between experimental and control groups on the dependent variable attitude over time intervals of three, six, and nine weeks.

TABLE 5

Summary of Analysis of Variance: One-way ANOVA

Change in Attitude Toward Black Dialect over Time Intervals of Three, Six, and Nine Weeks

Source	df	SS	MS	F
(A) Between groups: control versus experimental	1	1153.71	1153.71	17.52**
Residual (Subjects within groups)	48	3161.09	65.86	
Total	49	4314.80		

$F(1,48)$ = approx. 7.24 with α = .01

The F value ($p < .01$) for factor A shows that the dependent variable attitude was an important source of variance between the two groups across time.

Table 6 depicts a one-way analysis of variance on time intervals with comprehension as the dependent variable. The F value ($p < .01$) for factor B indicates that the dependent variable comprehension was a significant source of variance across time.

TABLE 6

Summary of Analysis of Variance: One-way ANOVA

Change in Comprehension of Black Dialect
over Time Intervals of Three, Six, and Nine Weeks

Source	df	SS	MS	F
(B) Time Intervals: Three, Six, Nine Week Intervals	2	67.69	33.83	33.70**
Residual (B by subjects within groups)	96	96.41	1/01	
Total	98	164.10		

$F(2,96)$ = approx. 4.90 with $\alpha = .01$

Since factor B (time intervals) has three cell means for each dependent variable, a pairwise comparison among these means for each variable would indicate where significant differences exist. Such information should indicate trends across time of attitude changes and of comprehension changes.

The multiple comparison procedure used to find where the significant differences lie was Tukey's HSD:

	T_1 (3 weeks)	T_2 (6 weeks)	T_3 (9 weeks)
Cell Means for Attitude	1.040	2.080	2.360
Cell Means for Comprehension	-2.620	-2.060	-1.000

$$HSD = q\ .95\ (k,f) \sqrt{\frac{MS\ error}{n}}$$

Given: k (number of steps between ordered means) = 3

f (degrees of freedom of MS error) = 96

n = 50

Then q .95 = 3.38 (Studentized Range Statistic)

Variable 1 - attitude

$$HSD = 3.38 \sqrt{\frac{2.240}{50}} = .746$$

$T_2 - T_1 = 1.040^*$

$T_3 - T_2 = .280$

Variable 2 - comprehension

$$HSD = 3.38 \sqrt{\frac{1.004}{50}} = .480$$

$T_1 - T_2 = -.56^*$

$T_2 - T_3 = -1.06^*$

The foregoing pairwise comparisions indicate that attitudes of the student teachers toward Black dialect improved significantly ($p < .05$) between the third week and sixth week but leveled off with no significant change during the sixth to ninth-week period. On the other hand, the comparisions show that comprehension of Black dialect improved significantly ($p < .05$) between the third week and sixth week and continued to improve significantly during the sixth to ninth-week period.

Since these cell means represent data on all fifty student teachers, further insight into changes of attitude and comprehension may be given by plotting the cell means across time for each group on each dependent variable. These data are presented in the following figures:

Figure 1

Separate Means for the Experimental and Control Groups on the Dependent Variable Attitude at Three Time Intervals

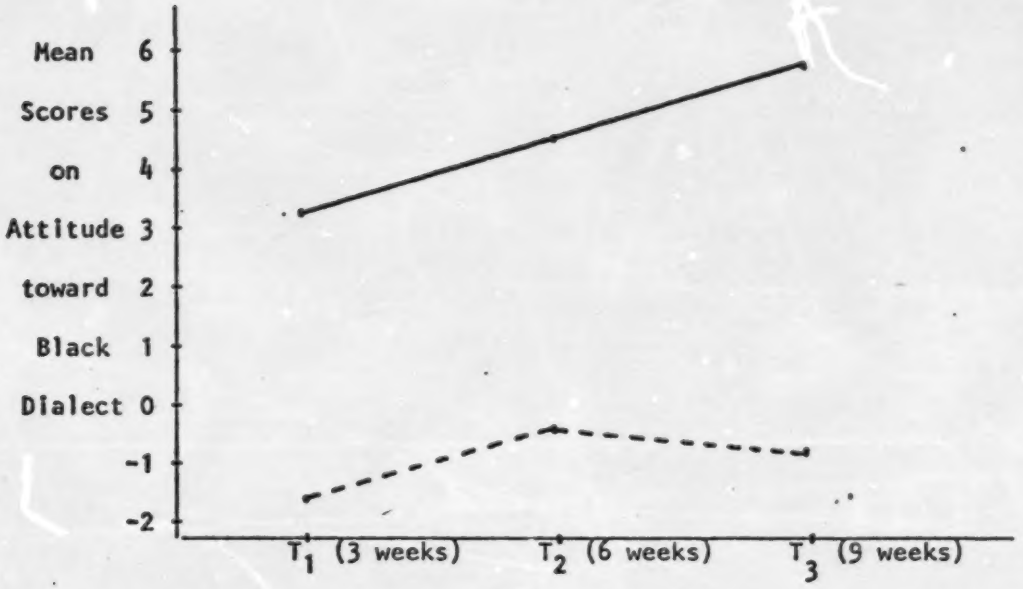
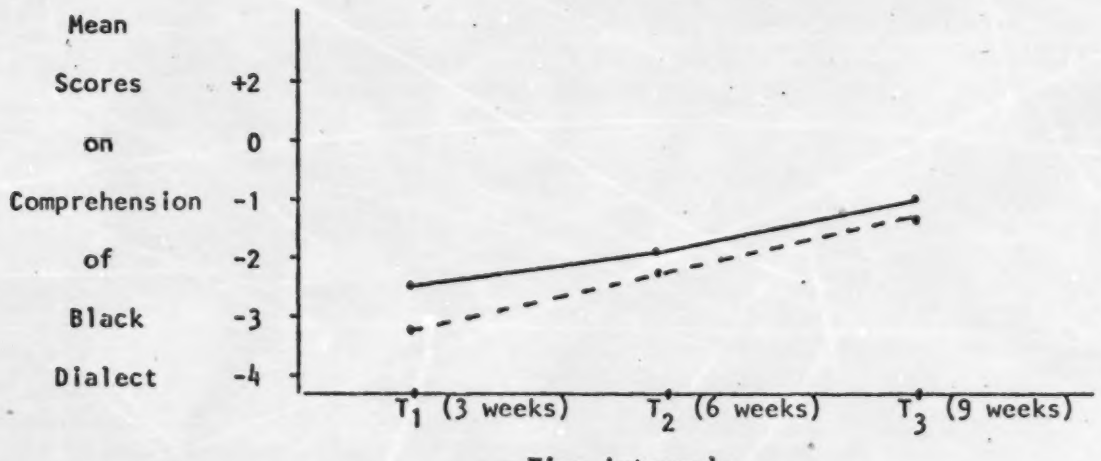


Figure 2

Separate Means for the Experimental and Control Groups on the Dependent Variable Comprehension at Three Time Intervals



Conclusions

Without a climate favorable for experimentation in this particular teacher center, the second phase of this experiment could not have been conducted and the first phase would have been difficult to complete. The school environment provided the student teachers the opportunity to investigate firsthand the culture and language of the community and the school. Since much research in instruction and curriculum can be accomplished best within the school environment, the teacher eudcation center offers one of the most promising settings for meaningful educational research.

From the experiment itself, one can make several generalizations. First the study demonstrates that attitudes of student teachers toward nonstandard dialects can be changed in a positive way. The experiment also shows that the listening comprehension of Black dialect by middle class student teachers can be improved significantly. These changes were accomplished over a relatively short period of time, approximately forty hours of intensive study. The treatment given the experimental group might be characterized as eclectic and humanistic in nature with its emphasis on observing the language and culture of the community, listening to tape recordings of Atlantan Black elementary pupils, reading selections of Black literature, and discussing causes of language variation.

In the second phase of the experiment, the changes in attitude and comprehension of the student teachers as they worked with children showed interesting differences between the experimental and control groups. The experimental group started the actual student teaching experience with a more favorable attitude toward Black dialect. Conversely, the control group started with a less favorable attitude and failed to show much improvement

throughout the student teaching period. This retention and growth of a positive attitude toward the Black dialect supports the value of the pre-student teaching training experience. On the other hand, the control group, starting student teaching with a lower comprehension of Black dialect than the experimental group, gained rapidly and by the end of six weeks was as competent as the experimental group in comprehending Black dialect spoken in the classroom. Whether the specific training in listening comprehension was worth the time and cost is open to question. The answer probably lies in an unexplored area in this experiment: the nature of the interaction between student teachers in the control group and their pupils during their first few weeks of classroom contact. These first days may have been crucial in effecting a favorable learning climate.

Implications

It is the belief of the authors that teacher centers may serve as a natural context for expansion of the major findings of this study. The continuity of supervision personnel from the public schools and university coupled with the richness of the urban culture in which the student teacher is placed serves as a verdant context from which to examine attitudes and values held toward language.

The teaching center may serve as a place to implement teacher preparation processes which help a student to deal with language differences. One such way that this may be implemented would be through a cycle which entails:

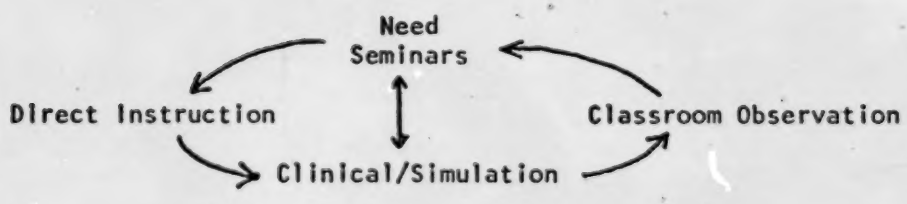
1) direct instruction
2) clinical demonstration
3) classroom observation
4) need seminars

Since the students involved in the teaching centers are engaged in student teaching, a language program could be part of the orientation to the center; furthermore, if specific follow up work beyond the orientation period is needed, the student teaching experience could serve as the base for the continued experience. Important to the cycle is the frequency and type of periodic feedback mechanisms built into the sequence. We would suggest consideration of the processes or stages briefly described below:

The first stage of the sequence would be the delivery of language content through some form of direct instruction. The presentation of language differences could be achieved through small group discussion, lectures, readings and learning packets. The second stage would be the demonstration of related skills in a controlled, clinical setting. This could entail the practice of hearing the language and reacting in a systematic, simulated manner. The third stage concentrates upon observing for language differences and the variety of personal responses to those differences. From the clinical and observation stages would come the content for periodic seminars. This forth stage would stress the specific needs of the student teacher while the language is becoming assimilated into a personal value structure. The model for these four stages is shown in Figure 3.

Figure 3

Instructional Sequence
In a
Teaching Center



The instructional sequence outlined above could also become part of a staff development program for supervising teachers in the teaching center. The stress of a staff development program for teachers would be on interpersonal approaches for increasing a teacher's sensitivity to linguistic differences and to ultimately increase their communication effectiveness with pupils in the teaching center.

The strength of this cycle is that once the basic language content is presented the student teacher or teacher is provided ample opportunity to practice, observe and refine the practice. The instructional sequence is supported by direct instruction once specific needs are identified.

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